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ABSTRACT

Public education today involves various citizen groups, state agencies, service organizations, interest groups, institutions of higher education, and other constituencies who influence policies and assist districts with finances, materials, and personnel. This bulletin discusses strategies for organizing these groups into a coalition that coordinates their various activities. The first section defines coalitions, describes their types, and presents a rationale for establishing a coalition of outside groups to support a school district. The second section discusses steps to take in the formation of coalitions: identifying the need, initiating the coalition, and setting up a governing board. The third section provides suggestions for the effective operation of coalitions, including strategies for dealing with conflict and for clear communication between district and coalition. The final section provides the following examples of coalitions in action: (1) Adopt-a-School Program; (2) Career Awareness through Mentors; (3) Outreach to Senior Citizens; (4) Small Grants Programs; (5) Fund-Raising for the Coalition; (6) Public Awareness Campaign; and (7) Miscellaneous Projects. Appended are the addresses of organizations cited in the bulletin, references, and a list of persons interviewed. (TE)

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BUILDING COALITIONS FOR SUPPORT OF SCHOOLS

Thomas E. Hart

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Preface

Public education today is a process that involves personnel and resources beyond those provided by the hierarchical structure of a district. Various citizen groups, state agencies, service organizations, interest groups, institutions of higher education, and other constituencies influence policies and assist districts with finances and material and personnel resources.

Organizing the many contributing (and sometimes conflicting) groups into one organization that coordinates their activities is the focus of this OSSC Bulletin. Drawing from examples of coalitions (also called partnerships or funds) across the country and in Oregon, Thomas Hart presents a rationale for establishing a coalition. He then gives suggestions about how to form a coalition and about the projects that it can accomplish. Particularly helpful to districts interested in starting coalitions are the free materials available from a number of the sources cited.

Hart, an OSSC graduate research assistant, is a doctoral student in the Division of Educational Policy and Management at the University of Oregon. He has held a number of chief administrative positions in international and overseas schools.

Philip K. Piele
Executive Secretary

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Introduction

Although the 1980s will no doubt be remembered among educators primarily for sweeping attempts at school reforms, the decade will also go down in history as a time of growing *public* involvement in education. Indeed, reform and public involvement go hand in hand. Reports such as *A Nation at Risk* and the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy's *A Nation Prepared* served to focus the country's energies on a concerted effort to improve the quality of schools. Parents, civic and service organizations, large corporations and small businesses, community leaders, senior citizens, and other groups all have become more involved than ever before in district, state, and national educational issues.

A Nation at Risk concluded with the plea

> that all segments of our population give attention to the implementation of our recommendations....Reform of our educational system will take time and unwavering commitment. Help should come from students themselves; from parents, teachers and school boards; from colleges and universities; from local, State, and Federal officials; from teachers' and administrators' organizations; from industrial and labor councils; and from other groups with interest in and responsibility for educational reform.

At the same time many of the above groups are participating in the process of reform, educators themselves are increasingly aware that schools are open systems that interact with and are affected by the society they serve.

In the most progressive districts, school leaders are openly welcoming coalitions between educators and groups of citizens for the support of schools. In some cases, these coalitions—going under such names as partnerships, local education funds, alliances, or foundations—represent a broad-based effort to improve the educational system as a whole. In other cases, the coalitions seek to accomplish specific objectives or manage particular projects. The members of these coalitions are disparate interest groups who see in the schools the means by which the next generation of Americans will be ensured a competitive place in the world's marketplace, or be more productive (socially, politically, and economically) citizens of future America.

Perhaps an indication of the success of coalitions is their remarkable rate

of appearance across the country. In the case of partnerships between schools and businesses, for example, Boyd Odom (1986) points out that in 1980 there were fewer than ten functioning models in the nation, but by 1986, there were "more than 40,000 recognized business and education partnerships functioning in the United States." Educational publications are full of articles urging school leaders to participate in economic development projects, suggesting ways of starting and managing partnerships, and citing how partnerships are proving beneficial to a number of districts where they have been established.

Coalitions must deal with the diverse interests that exist in all communities. In any given school district, groups with different purposes will respond differently to proposed programs. For example, a plan to improve the language skills of students will be generally welcomed by the business community, which has a need for a literate work force; but home owners may not favor this school program if their property taxes have to be increased to fund it. What happens, then, is that different groups coalesce according to their perceptions and act to support or defeat various proposed plans.

It is becoming increasingly clear to many administrators that coalitions will develop even if school districts do not encourage their formation. If coalitions are to make significant contributions to the cause of education, however, the district must lead the way.

This Bulletin cites examples of coalitions in Oregon and across the nation that have been working effectively for years. Drawing on the experience of these coalitions, I discuss what coalitions are, how they are formed, how to prevent or deal with problems that arise in their operation, and what kinds of goals they typically set out to achieve. Throughout the Bulletin I have tried to provide practical information that districts may elect to incorporate when they initiate coalitions.

Chapter 1

Coalitions Defined

Just exactly what are coalitions, how long do they usually last, and how do their goals and structures vary? Do they coexist peacefully with the school districts they are intended to support, or are they considered unwelcome guests who sometimes intrude into the district's affairs? And who participates in coalitions? These are some of the questions this chapter will address.

A good general definition of a *coalition* is offered by the Public Education Fund Network (1988):

> a third-party, non-profit entity whose agenda, at least in part, consists of developing supportive community and private sector relationships with a public school system. It provides limited private sector support to launch initiative and broker relationships leading toward school improvement.

As the following pages demonstrate, coalitions vary widely in their goals and methods, but the common factor is the recognition of the need for renewal of the community's interest in its schools and an absence of any already existing collaborative group to bring that about.

Temporary or Permanent?

Coalitions are often thought of as temporary fusions of distinct groups that unite around a common issue and then dissolve when there is some resolution of the issue that brought them together. Such a closure might be the completion of a project, the result of an election, or the formation of a more permanent task force or committee. In this view, coalitions are transient groups that form and disband with the emergence and fading of issues.

In a number of instances, however, coalitions have taken on a more permanent structure. For example, the Massachusetts Childcare Coalition was established in 1979 to disseminate information during a major day care crisis. Realizing that the coalition was weak because it lacked structure and because it relied too heavily on its founder who had many other matters that demanded her time, the coalition's membership created a transition steering committee to define the role and functions of the coalition. Eventually, as Mindy Fried

(1983) explains,

> a more permanent committee was formed and efforts made to expand membership to include other human service and community groups whose interests overlap with child-care.

The coalition then sought to create alliances with other human service advocates and to involve parents and family day care providers. Because its structure evolved in this way, the coalition was still operative years after its formation and had expanded its power base to try to influence the way the community regarded day care.

In this case—typical of how many long-term coalitions have developed—there was a need that could not be fulfilled by one individual or one group acting alone. Coalitions are the agents that can effect change because they possess more power as a result of the numbers and varied representations of their constituents. As Terry Black (1983) states,

> It often takes the coordinated effort of many organizations to develop the power to change a policy for the better, to stop an oppressive policy, or, in many cases, to get public attention focused on a policy of importance.

In sum, a coalition's lifespan is more determined by the membership than by extrinsic factors. For example, even if the coalition's immediate purpose is realized (for example, the passage of a tax base), the membership could decide to keep the group working for other district needs. This would be particularly likely if the coalition has a membership that is representative of a broad community base. On the other hand, a coalition that focused on a single issue might decide to dissolve because its membership, committed only to that issue, considers its work finished. Most coalitions, however, tend to refocus their energies and continue with the same or a slightly modified membership.

Types of Coalitions

Coalitions differ not only in duration but in focus, organization, and structure. Black states that there are four decisions that must be made in the process of forming coalitions for any given purpose:

1. ad hoc versus issues-area coalition
2. organization versus combination coalition
3. formal versus informal coalition
4. inside versus outside coalition

Ad hoc vs. issues area. Some coalitions are formed to deal with a specific issue, whereas others focus on several issues in a general substantive area. For example, a coalition could be formed either to promote the passage of a particular tax base or to deal with district finance in general. Coalitions that deal with specific issues are usually short-term, whereas those dealing with a substantive area are long-term. For obvious reasons, long-term coalitions are harder to hold together. Ad hoc coalitions can change into more

long-term groups when a working relationship is established that can be applied to other issues or broader considerations. The Massachusetts Childcare Coalition, mentioned above, is an example of this type of transformation.

Organization vs. combination. Organized coalitions are those whose memberships are limited to organized groups and whose activities are directed by the designated representatives of member groups, whereas combination coalitions have both organizational and individual members. The latter are usually community-based, loosely organized, and narrowly focused. This is an important option for school districts, because when issues arise that affect the operation of the district as a whole, or even the operation of particular programs, a broader cross-section of ideas and resources might be needed than could be offered by organizations alone. If all the district needs is some specific professional advice or assistance, however, then a few selected organizations would probably provide more helpful input than would a larger pool of individuals.

In the case of a coalition that includes both organizations and individuals, a leader is needed who is able to mobilize different factions to respond to each issue of interest without alienating those not selected.

Formal vs. informal. Formally structured coalitions have constitutions or guidelines of operation that have been established and approved by the membership. All members must operate within the parameters they have agreed upon. If changes in structure or operations are made, they are accomplished by the group according to the agreed articles. This type of coalition tends to be more effective, but it requires more time to form and is more costly to run.

Informal groups meet less regularly, have minimal structures, and require minimal resources from their member organizations. Information sharing and coordination of the efforts of all the group members are the most important activities of informal coalitions. Member organizations usually decide on their own how to best accomplish an assigned task and act on their own initiative.

Inside vs. outside. Inside coalitions are short-term, informal groups created when a number of lobbying organizations rally around a specific public issue that is of concern to all the organizations. Outside coalitions take a wide variety of forms. According to Black, they

> often involve a diverse group of organizations that believe one or more issues or activities may best be promoted with a unified structure and a more formal approach to coordination. Typically, such a coalition has a central management or coordination set-up which is sustained by contributions from the participating organizations. Usually it has a name, lists its member organizations on printed stationery, and issues public statements as a coalition.

Commitment to a Goal

To coordinate their activities and prevent duplication of effort, the

members of a coalition must be committed to a common goal. But as Jayne Richmond and Robert Shoop (1984) comment, "this collaborative effort demands a high degree of trust, frequent face-to-face communication and a great deal of commitment." This commitment can be realized when a number of groups or agencies in the community are already concerned about an issue and simply need a nucleus around which to form an active organization. A necessary tool for expressing the members' commitment is a carefully prepared mission statement.

Some coalition mission statements are quoted in the resource guide of the Local Education Fund. For example, the Bridgeport (Connecticut) Public Education Fund was established

> To secure resources from individuals, corporations, and foundations to be distributed to support programs that will stimulate excellence in and mobilize community support for Bridgeport public schools.

Partners in Education in Decatur, Illinois,

> is a coalition of business, industry, civic and educational interests committed to: 1) linking the schools and the community in a comprehensive program of school improvement; and 2) building the public's confidence in the schools through this program.

The Public Education Coalition in Denver, Colorado,

> is an independent nonprofit organization whose purpose is to focus the private sector upon enhancing the quality of and support for public education.

The Paterson (New Jersey) Education Foundation, Inc., will

> secure resources from individuals, corporations, and foundations to be distributed to support programs for the benefit of the students in the Paterson Public Schools, for which federal, state, and local funding has not been and is not available, and which will lead to the overall improvement of the quality of education and an enhancement of community support for public education.

And, A+ For Education in Tacoma, Washington,

> mobilizes community support, concern, commitment and resources, to enhance public education (K-12) in Tacoma. Our goals are: 1) to encourage quality educational projects and activities which strengthen public education in Tacoma and are not funded with public monies; 2) to generate community recognition of the need for and benefit of excellent public schools in Tacoma; and 3) to serve as a catalyst for public-private partnerships which benefit public education in Tacoma.

More examples could be given, but the pattern is already clear: coalitions by any other name still are cooperative efforts to advance education in their districts, and they act to supplement and perhaps even coordinate the efforts of existing groups in a district but not to replace them.

Relationship with the School District

Coalitions, it must be emphasized, do not attempt to exercise control over the administration of the district. Rather they act to mobilize resources not traditionally available to school administrators or teachers. The coalition's role is to establish links between community leaders and the school district, thereby making the district more visible to members of the public. It is hoped that the more aware the public is of the needs of schools, the more supportive it will be of the schools.

An example of a group that seeks to generate this kind of support is the Public Education Fund, established in 1983 as a national nonprofit organization charged with developing local independent community leadership groups (known as local education funds) that would work to improve the quality of public education. The fund believes that these organizations have reduced the isolation of the public schools, restored and built confidence in the schools, created educational initiatives, and generated local money to nourish and develop school improvement. Since the first grant-making meeting in September 1983, the fund's Board of Directors has awarded numerous grants to education funds in urban areas across the country.

Because the local education fund links schools with the communities they serve, it is independent of the district or any one special interest group. The fund serves as a broker, a convener, a catalyst; it is a facilitator to help schools do their job better and is always open to new ways to achieve that goal. The fund is not regarded as a shadow school board, an instrument of the superintendent or school board, or a source for dollars to replace lost public funds.

Examples of Participants

School officials can choose among a wide variety of agencies that would be able to work effectively with their districts. William Slotnik and his colleagues (1980), who offer the following list of potential participants, point out that the selection of cooperating agencies will differ according to local politics and needs.

- school departments
- senior citizen centers
- libraries
- hospitals
- consumer organizations
- Health Department
- churches
- recreation departments
- child advocacy organizations
- craft guilds
- legal service clinics
- Department of Human Services
- youth centers
- museums
- Office of Consumer Affairs
- universities and colleges
- YMCA
- community centers
- community development corporations
- welfare rights groups
- private schools
- neighborhood task forces

civic associations
civic organizations
day care centers
tenants rights organizations
Department of Mental Health
League of Women Voters
business associations

To this list could be added groups already more directly tied to the schools such as the parent teachers association, teacher organizations, advisory councils, school boards, elected government officials, media representatives, and local sports or athletic groups.

In Fern Ridge, Oregon, Superintendent Les Wolfe meets with loggers a few times a week from 5:30 to 7:00 a.m. as they drink their morning coffee before going to work. In Portland's David Douglas School District, the East County Coalition helps to keep the community informed about tax base issues. The Fern Ridge coffee discussions are an example of a permanent but informal and fluid group. Members of this group are interested in many issues and provide ongoing advice and support for programs the district might introduce to improve education in general. The David Douglas coalition, on the other hand, is an issue-specific group that focuses the attention of district voters on vital financial needs.

In seeking participants for coalitions, school districts must be realistic in their expectations. However commendable it may be to get a number of groups actively involved, school officials would be naive to expect that those who do not have a direct association with the schools should become enthusiastically involved without some benefit for themselves. Accommodating the human needs of coalition participants is indeed one of the biggest challenges facing the coalition builder. Using their creativity and initiative, school officials can often find ways of generating support for schools even among the most unlikely constituents. In Oregon's Tigard School District, for example, school officials have accommodated the needs of an active senior citizens group by installing special equipment in the swimming pool so that they can make us of it outside school hours. Recognizing that this equipment was provided especially for them, the seniors reciprocate in their efforts on behalf of the district.

In the next chapter, our attention turns to the mechanics of organizing coalitions.

Chapter 2

The Formation of Coalitions

The formation of a coalition for the support of schools can be stimulated by a wide range of factors, some of which may be external to the schools themselves. A common element in the formation process is that some group identifies a need and contacts other groups with an interest in the issue. This nucleus then begins to discuss what it perceives to be its major goals and ways of accomplishing them. These are the steps that Slotnik and his colleagues refer to as *identification* and *initiation*. Following a discussion of these stages in the organizational process, this chapter examines the composition and role of the coalition's governing board.

Identifying the Need for a Coalition

Reasons for the formation of coalitions can be broadly categorized as issue-specific or project-generated. Examples of issue-specific coalitions are a group organized to cope with an upcoming tax levy and a coalition formed in response to a government order to desegregate schools. A group that assists the district with ongoing monitoring of its business operations, on the other hand, is an example of a project-generated coalition.

A common characteristic of both of these types of coalitions is that their rationales are narrowly focused on a particular issue or project. Rarely are coalitions formed out of a general desire to get others in the community involved in what the district is doing; I found no examples of this general approach in the districts I contacted while writing this Bulletin.

Perhaps the best way to characterize the kinds of needs that have stimulated the formation of coalitions is to look at several examples from around the country. A desire to advance international education is the rationale for a San Francisco Bay Area coalition of three major organizations—Global Perspectives in Education, the Center for Research in International Studies, and the World Affairs Council of Northern California—and several other organizations that play lesser roles. Robert Freeman (1982) is candid in admitting that

> it is difficult to say exactly what factors caused this coalition to come together in 1978 or to succeed consequently...[but]...it was decided to focus on issues, cultures and concepts as the content, on a methodology of well-balanced and educationally sound approaches, and on an organizing strategy that would mobilize a variety of community and university resources.

More wide-ranging issues prompted the formation of Denver's Public Education Coalition (PEC), which began in 1984 to address problems facing public education in the metropolitan area. A series of issues starting with a segregation case in the late 1960s, a loss of population, and a financial crisis because of the fall in oil prices served to spur community members to "build constituencies supportive of public education and to increase involvement in and awareness of the schools so that the community begins taking responsibility for educating our children," wrote Susan Zimmerman, executive director of PEC.

A similar situation stimulated the formation of the New York City Partnership in 1979 after the city's fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s convinced David Rockefeller and some other business leaders that the capacity of the private sector to respond to the needs of the city (education being one of them) had to be institutionalized. Rockefeller pulled together a broad private-sector group representing business, nonprofit and civic organizations, and universities. Today the partnership is a strong private-sector advocate on a broad range of economic and social issues; it manages a number of programs targeted to affordable housing, education, youth employment, economic development, and public safety. As the partnership demonstrates, a coalition can successfully address many needs to match the concerns of its constituent groups.

North Clackamas School District, south of Portland, provides an example of a coalition formed to assist the district's business operation. No immediate issue gave rise to the action, but rather an idea that the local school district should make sure the public is getting a product it wants and needs. In November 1982 the school board approved the formation of a business-advisory task force. William Dierdorff (1984), the district's business manager, writes that, although the task force was "initially formed to improve the business practices of the district and strengthen the linkage between the district and the business community, it was soon discovered that this relationship could prove beneficial to all—the district, the business community, and the community in general."

Concern about drug use prompted Oregon's Tigard School District to launch Tigard Turns the Tide, a nonprofit organization of parents and local community members.

Facing a divided community when he assumed the superintendency in Fern Ridge, Les Wolfe sought to remedy the situation by bringing together the various factions. After some years of "bridge building," the district is now setting up an advisory body of various groups from the community.

In all the examples cited, the factors stimulating the development of

coalitions have a common element. In all cases it was acknowledged that a matter affecting the schools could best be dealt with if it involved a wider group than just the district personnel. The groups realized that individuals outside the school had expertise and contacts that would benefit the district. In turn, participants in the coalitions saw that they could benefit both directly and indirectly from the actions taken to assist the district.

The next important step is to identify the people or community sectors that can participate in the coalition.

Initiating a Coalition

It goes without saying that in any community disparate groups may help or hinder school projects. If a coalition is to be a constructive force in supporting the schools, the groups involved must be able to work together to fulfill the goals they have set for the coalition. A school district that wants to encourage participation in a coalition should be able to identify, on the basis of its knowledge of the community, major groups that can be asked to be "a part of the action."

Identifying Members

To determine potential members, the coalition builder can compile three lists, as suggested by Terry Black (1983):

> (1) all of the "natural" allies—individuals, groups, types of people—who may share the concern and support a similar position; (2) all of the types of persons, groups and social structures likely to be affected by the issue or position taken—both affirmatively or negatively; and (3) all potentially interested and civic-minded groups who might stand to gain indirectly by supporting the same issue or constituents.

Another way to identify groups is by administering a community information questionnaire, which can be used to gather data about the political, social, economic, and power bases in the district. The Michigan State Board of Education (1984) recommends compiling a fact sheet that displays such data. The board says analysis of the community should include descriptions of (1) the community demography (formation and development of neighborhoods and their styles, patterns of land use and zoning, general population statistics); (2) the community power structure (the persons or groups that influence community decisions), and (3) the community life support systems (communication, culture, housing, law, recreation, and so forth). This information is the starting point for determining the constituencies from which coalition members will be recruited.

Several examples will clarify how a coalition might be constituted. The New York Alliance for the Public Schools brings together the leadership of the Board of Education; the United Federation of Teachers; the Council of

Supervisors and Administrators; the United Parents Association; corporate, civic, and community leaders; and a working consortium of the deans of education at Fordham University, New York University, St. John's University, Teachers College at Columbia University, and the City University of New York. This might seem a large group, but the alliance has a large number of diverse projects in which different groups participate to varying degrees.

The Allegheny Conference Education Fund has twenty-one corporate financial contributors and enjoys the cooperation of business and civic leaders, members of the Pittsburgh Board of Education, previous and current school superintendents, the district's administrative staff, the Pittsburgh Federation of Teachers leadership, and teachers, principals, and students of the Pittsburgh Public Schools.

At the beginning of the 1983-84 school year, there were more than 190 official, full-time member organizations of the Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, Inc. These members represented businesses, colleges, and public schools as well as civic/service organizations such as the Atlanta Chamber of Commerce, Jaycees, and Central Atlanta Progress.

The Public Education Coalition in Denver includes on its board the superintendents of four Denver metro area school districts, school board members, teacher union leaders, and business executives.

The Business-Advisory Task Force of North Clackamas School District began in June 1983 with eighteen business and community members, the district superintendent, and the district business manager. Represented on the task force are marketing, engineering, distribution, risk management, personnel management, facilities management, architecture, public works, economic development, auditing, labor law, banking, and senior citizens. It is interesting to trace how this group was formed.

The district, located in a suburban area, has a student enrollment of 11,900 from a population of 70,000. The community has no central business core, but consists of residential, commercial, light industrial, and regional warehouse areas plus a regional shopping center. Within this community, Dierdorff writes, members were sought who:

- would have executive-management experience in multimillion-dollar organizations
- would have an interest in the school district either as a manager or a major property-tax payer in the school district
- could provide a balance of perspective
- would be willing to volunteer time and expertise

Once these criteria were accepted, the next step was to identify potential members. This was done by compiling lists of the largest property owners, the major suppliers of services to the district, and other organizations sharing common interests with the district. The four categories that emerged were:

- the five largest property owners

- utility companies
- financial institutions (banking and insurance)
- professional and other members of the community (including representatives from the state, the county, and local business associations)

The board approved this targeted membership in the spring of 1983, and the district superintendent and business manager initiated individual contact with the prospective members. In June 1983 the task force began operation.

Contacting and Recruiting Members

Once potential members of the coalition are identified, the next step is, in Black's words, "to develop a strategy for selling" the coalition to potential participants. Black emphasizes that the coalition builders must clearly understand and be able to appeal to the potential members' self-interest, for the "pursuit of self-interest is fundamental to effective political action."

Districts will be better able to attract groups to the coalition if they can clearly demonstrate how the members will benefit from participation. For this reason, it would be wise to follow the example of the North Clackamas School District, which lists the benefits businesses that join its Partnerships in Education coalition can expect to receive:

- better educated students who may one day be your more productive employees
- the opportunity to directly affect the quality of your local schools and, ultimately, your community
- an improved quality of life for your employees' families through neighborhood stability and community spirit
- use of the school's resources for special classes, training programs or physical fitness activities
- the satisfaction of helping students understand the business world as they prepare themselves for careers

Likewise the New York City Partnership lists benefits that businesses can expect by participating in its programs:

- attracting and retaining qualified employees
- lowering training costs
- tax benefits derived from participation
- fostering goodwill in areas of operation
- a concern for the quality of community life
- the national public good.

In fact, Robert F. Wagner, Jr., president of the New York City Board of Education, in an introductory statement in a pamphlet published by the New York City Partnership, refers to participation in partnerships as

> enlightened self-interest at its best, because the involvement brings hope and determination to energetic, talented, and enthusiastic young people. Furthermore, by helping the future workforce sitting in our classrooms, business reduces staggering retraining and education costs, and increases future profitability.

When taking their "sales pitch" to the key persons in the targeted

organizations, coalition organizers should not only ask for help in developing the coalition, but also actively welcome additional ideas, Black advises. The goal is to enable all participants to feel a sense of ownership in the coalition's direction.

The final step in forming the coalition, Black says, is "to invite representatives of all allied organizations to an area-wide meeting to make a formal/official decision about whether to form a coalition, how the coalition should be structured, and what coalition strategies and activities to initiate."

An alternative process for recruiting members is described by Lynda Martin-McCormick (1982), who suggests that groups be contacted in a systematic way, consisting of three steps. First, a member of the recruitment committee phones the prospective members to find out if their organizations are interested in joining. Second, given a positive answer, the committee sends a letter inviting the organization to join the coalition and outlines exactly what is expected of coalition members and how they will participate in the achievement of the goal. Third, the committee meets with the new member. At the meeting they discuss ways that the two organizations can work together. This meeting may be followed by a formal letter of acceptance and commitment to work for the coalition.

Organizing a Local Education Fund

The procedures described above apply to the initiation of coalitions in general, both large and small, formal and informal. A more detailed set of steps for forming a specific type of coalition—a local education fund (LEF)—is recommended by the Public Education Fund Network in its 1988 handbook:

1. Research and summarize information regarding existing LEF's, particularly those with school districts of similar size and demographics.
2. Convene steering committee to review material and plan organizational strategy and affiliation—include business, civic, minority, parent, and school district leadership.
3. Determine general mission and goals and type of board of directors needed to develop and carry out the program.
4. Recruit incorporators and incorporate.
5. Develop preliminary bylaws.
6. Nominate and elect board of directors.
7. Ratify mission statement, bylaws, and initial budget.
8. Apply for 501 (c) (3) (non-profit) status, if necessary.
9. Establish committee structure.
10. Begin detailed planning for program development and fund raising. Begin fund raising.
11. Inform community of LEF's existence, goals, and needs.
12. Develop job description and seek fund director.
13. Hire LEF director and begin programs.

In suggesting these steps, the Public Education Fund Network assumes that a group already exists and is willing to begin the organization. Moreover,

the initiative for the LEF is assumed to lie with the community, not necessarily the district's administrators. (The network gives examples of funds that have been set in motion by a group of high-level business executives, a local school superintendent, a local community foundation, a broad-based civic organization whose agenda included education, a recognized civic leader, and a chamber of commerce.) Nevertheless, a similar approach could be adopted by the district if it thought that this kind of formal structure is what should be established in the community.

None of the formally organized educational coalitions in Oregon conforms to the above pattern of an LEF, perhaps because they were formed on the initiative of the school districts' administrators and have relatively simple structures since they are operated by district personnel. Most of the district administrators interviewed for this Bulletin said that all groups of the coalition only meet together occasionally. In a typical district, several administrators share the responsibility of meeting individually with the various groups.

It does seem to be true that, at least in a coalition's early years, its organizational structure is determined more by how it originated than by what it will do. As the coalition works together over time, however, a different organization might evolve, with a more formal structure adopted, bylaws established, and selective participation necessitated by the diverse programs it sponsors or the multiple functions it performs.

If a coalition decides to adopt a more formal structure, its leaders would be wise to review the steps listed above, beginning with gathering of information about LEFs in districts of similar size and demographics. The Public Education Fund Network (whose address is listed in the Appendix) can provide information about programs that are in operation across the country.

Governing Board

All formally organized coalitions have a governing board that will be able to establish policy and (if such will be a function) generate funds. So that the board will be credible to all participants, its composition should be representative of all segments of the community that the coalition wishes to embrace. If there is a large industrial base, leaders of prominent industries should be included; if there is a university, appropriate faculty or administrators could be invited; if it is a farming area, representatives from that sector might be appropriate. Most boards include members from the area churches, banks, chambers of commerce, and civic groups. The school district can be represented by such individuals as a school board member, the superintendent, a principal, a teacher, and a representative of the teacher's union.

In cases where the coalitions operate independently of school districts, the education representatives do not form a substantial proportion of the board membership. Instead, most board members are community leaders. This

situation should not be disturbing to school district personnel, because the coalition's raison d'etre is to locate additional sources of expertise that the district can draw upon. In fact, in some coalitions, the superintendent may not even serve as a board officer, though he or she could certainly be a board member. The same might also apply to participation by the teachers union or the school board. Local conditions, which dictate the need for and the composition of the coalition, will also determine how to select individuals for leadership.

Once the board is established, a common practice is to form committees to oversee the coalition's planned projects. Tasks can be allocated among committees that can enlist the help of additional participants as needed. One committee might also be established to draw up bylaws or regulations, which are necessary if the coalition is to become involved in fund raising. Bylaws are required as part of a 501(c) (3) application, which is a request to the Internal Revenue Service for a letter of determination that clarifies the organization's nonprofit status for tax purposes. A lawyer should file the articles of incorporation and handle the application.

Chapter 3

Suggestions for the Effective Operation of Coalitions

Because the very nature of a coalition brings together disparate groups and individuals who do not have a history of working together, the biggest challenge will be to maintain cooperation among the parties. This chapter warns of conflicts that can threaten the coalition's unity and proposes some guidelines that, if followed, will enable the members to work together harmoniously. A related issue is the need to maintain open communication between the coalition and the school district.

Anticipating and Dealing with Conflicts

"Internal group conflict is inevitable, should be anticipated, and treated constructively as part of the process of coalition building," states the California State Department of Education (1981). Indeed, Terry Black warns that "the coalition landscape is a minefield." Issues of control arise continually, he says, because the members are organizers and leaders in their fields. Black lists some of the difficulties coalitions can expect to face:

> Coalitions (1) may divert energy and resources from an organization's own priority issues; (2) take positions contrary to a member organization's interest or policy; (3) may use a consensus process for decision-making that is slow and sometimes cumbersome, resulting in a weakened position on some issues; and (4) may, due to differences among organizations, be prevented from taking as strong a stand or moving as swiftly as possible on an issue.

Another common problem is that a participant may try to influence the coalition to make a decision that will benefit primarily that one member. Consequently, the California State Department of Education advises coalitions to "avoid exclusiveness or domination by any one particular type of group."

Linda Martin-McCormick claims that, in the case of a coalition formed around a particular campaign issue, the most difficult problem may be

that coalition members will disagree on issues not central to the campaign. Thus she advises the campaign coordinators and other coalition leaders

> to keep everyone focused on the campaign and its plans. Acknowledge that member organizations are involved in other things and rightly so, but be clear that those issues and involvements are for their time outside the campaign.

Even the coalition's meeting place can be a source of contention. A neutral site is preferable. The Local Education Fund suggests that the coalition establish a distinct physical presence in the community by having an office and a meeting place not in a school, but in the community, such as the chamber of commerce or a corporate center.

To effectively cope with the tensions that occur in any decision-making group, participants should brush up on their interpersonal communications and conflict resolution skills. Perhaps a representative from the school district, such as a counselor, could provide some training in these areas.

If members might be insensitive to particular cultural differences that exist in the group, the following recommendations by the California State Department of Education are appropriate:

> Create an environment supportive of differences in attitudes and appearances of the coalition members.
>
> Appreciate verbal and nonverbal forms of expression based on ethnic, religious, socioeconomic, and other differences.
>
> Be tuned in to subtle signs of disaffection or lack of participation that may be directly related to group differences.

Black advises the coalition to "pull together rather than work on a hierarchical basis." Because the coalition could be likened to a small United Nations of sovereign states, decisions must be made through the consent of all participants. To help build unity, the component organizations should periodically express their commitment to the coalition's work and goals.

Although close interpersonal relationships can help the coalition to function smoothly, members must bear in mind that the coalition is not a club. The members represent their respective organizations, Black points out, and therefore they must, on any issue, state the organization's opinions, which may not necessarily conform to their own. Those who propose an issue should not take for granted the way an individual will vote. Instead, they should sound out each member's opinion as a voting representative, and in that way be more able to predict how a proposal might fare.

Robert Freeman gives some additional suggestions of steps coalitions can take to minimize conflict.

- determine the appropriate function for each member organization in the coalition, distinct from what it did before being in the coalition
- build into the coalition sufficient rewards for each member organization
- establish improved working relationships and control mechanisms

- determine whether or how the coalition should be expanded to include more resource agencies and more target groups
- fund the coalition on a long term basis
- maximize integration of efforts while providing necessary autonomy
- set priorities for approaching various audiences for support
- evaluate effectiveness with specific audiences, as an organizational structure, with the general public

Finally, coalitions, like all organizations, will function better if they integrate creative thinking exercises and small group work into their meetings. Similarly, Jeffrey Brown (1982) suggests the use of simulation games, such as those provided by Simulation II (see the Appendix for the address), including Bafa Bafa, Human Rights, and Spaceship Earth.

As with any cooperative activity, an awareness of potential difficulties serves to focus attention on productive ways to help the group accomplish its purpose. Motivating the members to work together harmoniously is the realization that they can attain goals that are beyond the reach of each member working alone.

Communication between District and Coalition

Another prerequisite for the effective functioning of an educational coalition is ongoing communication between the coalition and the schools it is intended to support. Maintaining such communication can itself be problematic, because, as the Committee for Economic Development (1985) notes, "schools and businesses differ in the ways in which people work." Collaborative efforts involving business and school personnel must take these differences in style and expectations into account in order to avoid conflicts.

One difference, for example, is the timeframe in which participants are accustomed to working. The business person, used to fast-paced meetings and quick decisions, may have to learn to be patient and wait somewhat longer to see results. In turn, as Dierdorff (1984) points out, the school district should also recognize that the desired results require action-oriented people who do not want to waste time; therefore, timelines must be established and projects completed as promised in a "business-like" manner.

One effective way to facilitate collaboration between the coalition and the district is to have the district designate some personnel as "linkage agents." These agents establish regular contact between members of the coalition and the district. In small communities, the superintendent or another designated administrator might be able to provide this linkage, whereas in larger settings where coalitions embrace many different groups, the task will have to be shared among several agents.

In the small community of Fern Ridge, for example, Les Wolfe meets with

the loggers over morning coffee, with the ministers of the churches, and with other groups he has identified. As a member of the chamber of commerce, he also attends its meetings. As there are no service clubs in the area, that avenue of community contact is not available. Wolfe is personally involved with all groups because he sees himself as the facilitator for uniting the many factions that divided the district before his arrival as superintendent. His efforts may bear fruit when the board completes the advisory body that it is now considering.

In contrast, the larger David Douglas School District has many groups that get involved with the schools in the district. Because there are a number of neighborhood associations, the principals take turns attending these meetings and then write up minutes for distribution to other district administrators. Many district personnel are also involved in the five-district East County Coalition, which has a specific task: to help inform the community about the districts' proposed tax bases. In the May 1988 election, voters approved two of the districts' tax bases but rejected the other three. Although the coalition dissolved, it will probably reform in October to prepare for the May 1989 election. (Meanwhile, the three districts that did not get their tax bases approved will work together in support of their tax levies.)

The North Clackamas district likewise employs a decentralized approach by dividing the responsibility for community contact among a number of people. For example, the superintendent is a member of the chamber of commerce (and is presently vice-president of that group), and the business manager is a member of the district's Business-Advisory Task Force. A registered lobbyist represents the district's views in the state capital.

Whether the district has one linkage agent or many, what matters is that each agent is fully committed to his or her role as a bridge between the school district and a specific segment of the community. The agent must also keep in mind that the coalition and its component groups, while committed to the improvement of the district and its programs, are not part of the district's administrative structure. This mutual understanding of and respect for the roles and the expertise of all participants will be crucial to the coalition's operation and projects.

Chapter 4

Coalitions in Action

In this chapter our attention turns to the actual work of coalitions—the projects and activities through which they enlist public support for education and enrich the lives of students and school personnel. The coalitions briefly profiled on these pages assist schools in such areas as career education, literacy, school and classroom innovations, and drug abuse prevention.

As these examples demonstrate, coalition projects lie outside the traditional administrative structure and financial support of the district. That is, the projects enable the district to provide services that it would not otherwise be able to provide.

Adopt-a-School Program

A common example of a coalition project involves businesses that "adopt" particular schools and lend practical support as needed. For example, the Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education has an "Adopt-A-School Program," which establishes partnerships between schools and local businesses. According to Jacqueline Danzberger and Michael Usdan (1984), the businesses provide support in the form of human services, such as supplying tutors for students, recognizing achievement through awards, employing students during the summer, and serving as consultants in certain areas. Various businesses also offer students and teachers instruction in computer skills, conduct tours of the business, furnish speakers, present career seminars, and supply career and cultural exhibits for school use.

Although the partnership does not solicit funds from its partners, it estimates that more than one million dollars worth of equipment, materials, and cash have been donated by the members as they have recognized the schools' needs. During the 1982-83 school year, 144 organizations adopted 86 schools or school programs, and more than 9,000 adult volunteers worked with schools in various ways.

Career Awareness through Mentors

Another coalition project that relies heavily on local businesses is the "Mentor Program" conducted by the New York Alliance for the Public Schools. Serving over 1,200 public school students, the program introduces them to career opportunities and underscores the relationship between their studies and their career goals. Over sixty-five firms and organizations contribute staff time and resources in the areas of law, engineering, education, advertising, banking, and retailing.

For example, the Mentor in Engineering program acquaints junior high school students with engineers at work, with the services and products of engineering, and with the skills required for entering the engineering profession. Through weekly lectures, demonstrations, and field trips, students observe "engineering in action" and meet engineers who can serve as role models. The engineering program began in 1986 with ninety seventh-grade students and engineers from seventeen of the major engineering firms in the New York metropolitan area. In the 1987 school year, the program expanded to serve 180 students with 23 firms participating.

The first mentor program was started in the field of law in 1982. This program expanded on the law-related courses offered in many of the city's high schools. Now in its fifth year, this program pairs twenty-seven law firms with twenty-seven high schools. All the programs are conducted in cooperation with the New York City Board of Education.

Outreach to Senior Citizens

In Tigard, Oregon, the district-initiated coalition reaches out to senior citizens in a special effort to garner their support for the schools. Superintendent Russel Joki makes it a point to let them know they are useful members of the community, and the district reinforces this message with action. As noted in a previous chapter, the district installed special equipment in the high school's swimming pool for their use, and it also gives senior citizens Booster Passes so they can attend sports events and make use of school facilities.

In a similar vein, Oregon's David Douglas School District hosts a senior prom for its senior citizens. According to Mary Smith, information officer, the district has also designated one high school as a social and cultural center for plays and other cultural events of interest to senior citizens.

Small Grants Programs

Coalitions commonly award small grants (also referred to as minigrants) to individuals or specific projects in the schools. The Allegheny Conference in

Pittsburgh is typical in that it developed its program to meet two needs that it believes are present in most public schools. First is the need to bring new resources to bear in the classroom, the focal point of education, and second is the need to encourage constructive interaction between the school district and business and civic leaders, municipal government, and community members who may not have children in the public school system.

In this program, teachers compete for community-sponsored grants to carry out innovative projects with their students. The conference raises funds to cover the cost of implementing classroom projects. Teachers in every subject area submit proposals for consideration by a review committee composed of community leaders. Selected proposals receive funding and public recognition, and are expected to be implemented within a year of the grant award date. Upon completion of each project, a report is submitted, along with some slides showing its operation and a detailed accounting of expenses. Although this program now awards about fifty grants each year totaling $20,000 annually, similar programs are conducted with as little as $1,000 and from funds generated by civic groups or the PTA.

Some examples of small and large awards given during the 1986-87 academic year illustrate the scope of the Allegheny Conference's program. A $20 grant was given to a kindergarten teacher to introduce her students to fire safety and prevention. In addition to doing home safety exercises and visiting the firehouse, the class constructed firefighter puppets and wrote storybooks about the learning unit. A high school librarian received a $50 grant to instruct students in the use of microfiche and microfilm instead of the traditional card catalog to do research. Funding was to provide the additional paper to enable students to make copies of articles used in research.

A $700 grant was given to a home economics teacher to purchase an "Ambu-Intubation Trainer," a three-dimensional moveable model that shows the intricate anatomy of the human nose, mouth, and tracheal areas. The purpose of this project was to acquaint students with the anatomy of this part of the body and to show the effects of smoking, chewing tobacco, and using drugs.

In a previous year, a $500 grant went to a teacher who interviewed and hired learning disabled high school students to tutor the members of a primary-grade learning disabilities class. The twofold purpose of the project was to help the high school students acquire important prevocational skills—through the experience of applying for and holding the tutoring job, and through weekly training sessions in such areas as filling out applications, interviewing, and punctuality—and to provide the primary students with special attention in basic reading skills, along with support and encouragement from people who have experienced similar difficulties.

In all the above examples, funds were provided with the understanding they could be used to compensate experts who came to work with students but not to pay public school teachers or staff. Funds could also be used to purchase equipment or to provide field trip transportation, not when these

were ends in themselves, but as components of a well-planned whole, integrated with other curriculum materials and activities. The coordinators of the program believe it is very effective because it helps to develop curriculum ideas that may become part of the regular program. Furthermore, it stimulates teachers to be innovative. Even teachers whose proposals are not funded are encouraged to resubmit at a later date. One coordinator said, "A grant can renew a teacher's zest for teaching. You can't put a price on that kind of benefit."

The Allegheny Conference also offers "Grants for Principals" to allow school administrators to initiate schoolwide projects. A vocational technical high school received an $1,800 grant to assist a team to implement a program that would give home economics, business, technical drawing, and construction students comprehensive "hands-on" work experience. A $2,000 grant went to an elementary school to create a program that would ease the transition of students from the elementary school to the middle school.

Fund-Raising for the Coalition

Partners in Education in Decatur, Illinois, provides an example of techniques a coalition can use to raise funds in support of its projects. The organization arranged with local businesses to underwrite each of the local high school's football touchdowns with a $25 contribution to the coalition. It also got a chain grocery to donate to the coalition a percentage of the value of cash register receipts that were taken in during a three day period. The store publicized the event, and the coalition contacted people to remind them to shop in the chain.

Public Awareness Campaign

The Public Education Coalition in Denver convinced an outdoor advertising company to donate a large painted billboard to the coalition's public information campaign for the Denver public schools. It also sponsors PEC Educational Forums, a series of discussions with national experts intended to heighten community awareness of educational issues. Different organizations help to host the forums. Another innovative effort to heighten public awareness of critical issues in K-12 education is an intensive six-week media campaign entitled "SchoolVote." At the end of the campaign, citizens are given the opportunity to "vote" on the issues through a nonbinding newspaper ballot. This same coalition is also involved in a literacy project now operating in ten elementary schools.

Miscellaneous Projects

The Jackson Education Fund in Jackson, Michigan, sponsors an Excellence in Education Day, where students receive scholarships and teachers are cited as having positively influenced students' lives.

The Tigard Turns the Tide program in Tigard, Oregon, recently developed a districtwide drug and alcohol policy and presented it to the school board for adoption. It has also developed a network directory of parents who wish to sign the pledge:

> I take the responsibility to ensure that all social events in my home for school-age children will be chaperoned and alcohol and drug free. I also agree to help other parents who might call me for information, assistance or advice.

A senior citizens group in Tigard also assists in many district programs.

The Business-Advisory Task Force in Oregon's North Clackamas School District takes on projects on a "need" basis, and these have differed in scope and emphasis. Included were the development of a long-range financial planning model, a marketing analysis to include a review of marketing research and the development of a model for a school district marketing plan, a review and evaluation of the school district's purchasing and warehouse operations, and a project to review the district's process of analyzing sites and facilities.

The above examples demonstrate that effective projects can be adopted almost anywhere, limited only by the imagination and the interest of coalition members. Once a coalition is organized and operating, a productive interaction and cross-fertilization of ideas resulting from the diverse character of the coalition will provide ample suggestions for project ideas to adopt.

Conclusion

The present climate of citizen concern for the quality of schools gives district administrators the opportunity to provide a "learning moment" to groups in the district that are sincerely interested in improving the quality of education in their schools. Citizens can feel frustrated or helpless, and eventually antagonistic, as a result of wanting to assist the schools but lacking the opportunity to do so. If a school district takes the initiative, presents the concept of a coalition, and shows how organizations and groups can become involved, it might be pleasantly surprised at the response.

It is advantageous for the district to take the initiative in forming the coalition, because then the district will play a major role in shaping the coalition's mission. That initial formative influence will remain even as the coalition becomes operative, especially as members see the district's commitment to making it work. School officials must expect to allocate some time and some meony, both initially and as an ongoing commitment. Certainly if administrators ask businessmen and civic leaders to spend time away from their livelihoods in order to assist the schools, it is reasonable to expect administrators to devote some of their discretionary time to the coalition.

Districts will be better able to attract groups to the coalition if they can clearly demonstrate that the members will benefit from participation. It is too much to expect an enthusiastic response to the statement that participation will produce a better student and a better community. "What's in it for me?" is often an unspoken question in the minds of potential coalition members. If this question is addressed by administrators at the beginning, potential members will be more likely to participate.

A district does not have to rely only on its own resident expertise to initiate the formation process. Some of the better known national and local coalitions cited in this Bulletin are more than willing to share their expertise with districts that would like to begin a coalition. The Appendix provides the addresses of organizations that have supplied materials used in the preparation of this Bulletin. By gathering a pool of information, a district will be able to consider the applicability of various models to its situation and then plan accordingly.

A good initial contact is the Public Education Fund Network in Pittsburgh. This national group serves as a source of information and assistance to

districts and citizens groups. Services provided by the network include

- technical assistance in the organization and development of local education funds (coalitions)
- assistance in the development of networks of local education funds on a state, local and national level
- access to a variety of local education funds of various sizes and complexity
- publications and information on local education funds including a handbook and resource materials on local education funds and small grants, materials from individual local education funds, and a quarterly newsletter
- small technical assistance grants for organizational development

The above services, which can include onsite assistance, are provided by PEF/NET staff and PEF grant recipients.

If businesses or other sectors of the community initiate a relationship with the schools, district administrators should be prepared to organize the relationship quickly and professionally. A good way to capitalize on this interest is to provide some information with the statement, "Well, here is how some business and civic organizations across the nation are helping their school districts deal with this. Do you want to consider something like this for our district?"

The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education has adopted a declaratory slogan entitled *The EQE* (Education, Quality, Everyone) *Declaration*. I believe that it sums up what a coalition is all about:

Education must be our number one national priority.
Quality must be our national watchword.
Everyone has a role to play.

Appendix

Contact Addresses of Organizations Cited in this Bulletin

Allegheny Conference on Community Development
3018 One Oliver Plaza
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15222

The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, Inc.
100 Edgewood Avenue, N.E., Suite 1200
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

New York Alliance for the Public Schools
32 Washington Place, 5th Floor
New York, New York 10003

New York City Partnership, Inc.
200 Madison Avenue
New York, New York 10016

The Public Education Coalition
1410 Grant Street, Suite A-10
Denver, Colorado 80203

Public Education Fund Network
Ms. Gerri Kay, Executive Director
600 Grant Street, Suite 4444
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15219
(412) 391-3235

Simile II
218 12th St.
Del Mar, California 92014

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The Atlanta Partnership of Business and Education, Inc.
New York Alliance for the Public Schools
New York City Partnership, Inc.
North Clackamas School District
The Public Education Coalition
Public Education Fund Network
Tigard School District

Interviews

William H. Dierdorff, Business Manager, North Clackamas School District, Milwaukie, Oregon. Interview 9 February 1988.

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Mary Smith, Information Services, David Douglas School District, Portland, Oregon. Interview 15 February 1988.

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